

Outlook

3rd quarter FY 08

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND MENTAL RETARDATION



Capitol Showcase
Consumer Art Exhibition
Just Around the Corner

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Outlook is a quarterly newsletter of the Alabama Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation. It contains articles and information about department initiatives, community mental health services, individual success stories, and relevant national topics.



Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Alabama mental health service delivery system to "Lift Life's Possibilities" by ensuring that the mental illness, mental retardation and substance abuse recovery needs of the state's citizen's are addressed in a manner that is maximally effective and efficient, while promoting the individual's quality of life, human worth, and dignity.



Letter from the Commissioner

At the risk of using an "overused" term, I would like to recognize several "collaborations" that are making an impact on the lives of the people we serve. When the department works with other organizations, families and consumer advocates for common goals, the results are magnified many times. I call it the "collaboration multiplier effect." The department strives to attain excellence in programmatic terms while other organizations and advocates see things from the perspective of the individuals being served. When these perspectives work in concert great things happen. Good examples of this principle are imbedded in the article featured further in this newsletter about the work of Jeff Ridgeway and Mike McLemore.

Jeff, who was a past president of People First of Alabama and is still active in many advocacy organizations, talked to lawmakers during the last legislative session about the issue of People First language. After his presentation on the floor of the State House, the legislature overwhelmingly passed the legislation Jeff supported. His actions will have lasting benefits to his peers and is an inspiration to us all.

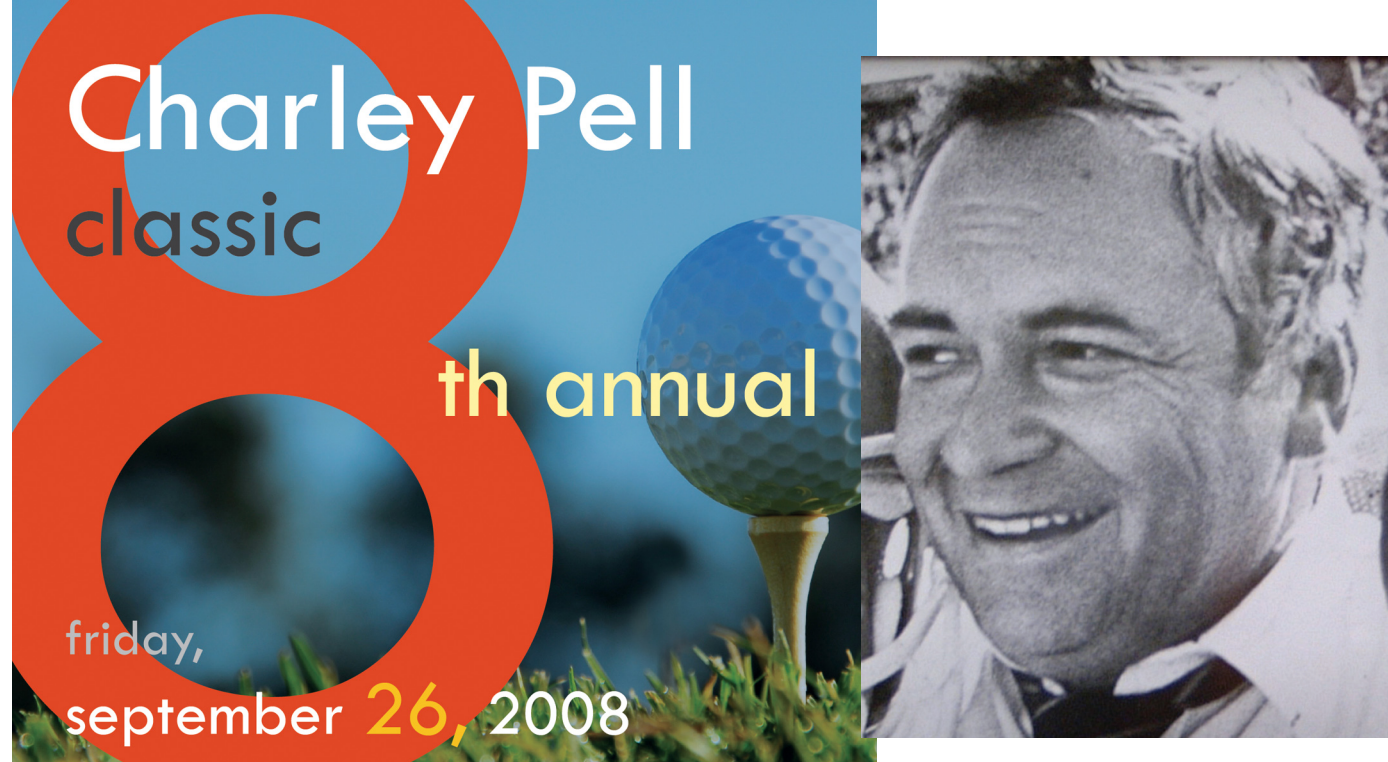
Mike McLemore, with Friends of Recovery, Morgan, Madison, Lawrence, Limestone, Cullman and Randolph counties (FORMLL), which is a local chapter of Alabama Voices for Recovery, has had a hand in many improvements in the statewide recovery movement. Mike's advocacy efforts and those of his colleagues have significantly raised the level of understanding and support for prevention and treatment of substance abuse and addiction.

Another example of the "collaboration multiplier effect" is seen through the efforts of two department sponsored conferences, The Alabama Adult and Adolescent Psychiatric Institutes. The Alliance for the Mentally Ill, Alabama Family Ties and DMH/MR partnered with the Academy of Pediatricians, the Department of Public Health and others to bring together state mental health professionals, primary care physicians and pediatricians to get a clearer picture of how to coordinate services to benefit patients and consumers. Finally, the efforts in planning activities in recognition of National Recovery Month were not those of the department alone, but in partnership with several other advocacy and faith-based organizations that will surely promote increased awareness of the recovery movement statewide.

In each of these instances families, consumers and advocates working through their respective organizations made an impact that enhanced and augmented the department's efforts. We are proud of the work that the department has done in conjunction with all the advocacy groups operating statewide. In the days and years ahead it will be essential that we work together. Several years ago, The Arc had a slogan which said it all: "Together, we can do more!" It was true then, and it is true now. Working together as partners, we can accomplish great things.

John M. Houston





Golf Tournament with a Cause Just Around the Corner

Golf tournaments can serve as a time to perfect your swing, visit with old friends and make new contacts. Sometimes, however, they can serve a much greater purpose. Such is the case with the annual Charley Pell Classic. Proceeds from the golf tournament are used to further the anti-stigma message of Charley Pell and to promote respect for people with mental illnesses ... and it has done just that.

The department has produced *The Legacy of Coach Charley Pell*, which can be viewed at the department's Web site. The 17-minute film traces Charley's story, starting when he played football under the legendary Alabama coach Paul (Bear) Bryant and became the youngest major college coach in the country. He later led football teams at Jacksonville State University, Clemson University and the University of Florida to conference and national championships. His drive to win was, however, a mask for a deeper problem, that being the illness of major depression.

After his departure from coaching and business ventures, his illness manifested itself more intensely. Charley spent a year meticulously planning suicide, which he attempted and miraculously failed. Following that attempt, he went to an inpatient residential treatment program for 17 days and his life began to change dramatically. In his recovery he became an advocate for people with mental illness and fought against the unwarranted stigma associated with the disease.

The film delivers the message loud and clear that mental illness is not a character flaw or sign of weakness. Rather, it is a treatable psychological and biological disorder that even the toughest athlete and coach can experience and overcome.

The documentary recently received a National Voice Award, sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The Voice Awards program, which began in 2005, has provided a unique opportunity to reduce stigma and promote recovery associated with mental health problems by acknowledging and celebrating the efforts of entertainment professionals who have helped support that movement. Commissioner Houston said of the award, "We are very proud of receiving an Honorable Mention Citation in the Voice Awards. We had to compete in the 'entertainment industry' category that included programs like 'Law and Order' and 'Monk.' Coach Pell's story delivers a powerful and compelling message and that substantive element makes the film unforgettable."

Along with that recognition, several articles about the documentary have run in local and national media outlets highlighting the film and its honor. In addition, the Alabama High School Athletics Association has distributed the film to its affiliate Athletic Directors and will feature it at its upcoming summer conference for coaches.

Hopes are high that the 8th annual Charley Pell Classic will allow for more anti-stigma projects like the film. While everyone who attends can indeed enjoy perfecting that swing, visiting with old friends, and making new contacts, at the same time they can honor a man who has touched the lives of so many.

8th Annual Charley Pell Classic
September 26, 2008

Ol' Colony Golf Course in Tuscaloosa

Contact John Gray at Ol' Colony at (205) 562-3201
for more details.

Statewide Activities Promote Children's Mental Health Week

Improving services and conditions for children with serious emotional disorders (SED) was the focus of National Children's Mental Health Week. Governor Riley proclaimed Children's Mental Health Week in Alabama as May 1-8, 2008 and in conjunction with this proclamation, the Alabama Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation and Alabama Family Ties (AFT) worked together to increase public awareness and promote a greater understanding of mental health disorders that affect thousands of Alabama children each year.

Several public awareness and anti-stigma activities were held around the state, with one involving the help of several minor league baseball teams located throughout the state. The Birmingham Barons, Montgomery Biscuits, Huntsville Stars and Mobile Bay Bears all provided tickets to games for youth with serious emotional disturbances and their families. In all, more than 140 tickets were donated, giving youth from around the state the opportunity to attend a sporting event, something many families do not consider doing with an SED child or youth. The department and AFT worked with mental health centers statewide to distribute the tickets to families.

Kim Hammack, Coordinator of Child and Adolescent Services, who served as the department's key contact for coordinating these events, said, "What better way to coordinate a statewide awareness event than around a sporting event? It gave the youth the chance to participate in an event that normalizes social interactions, and allowed them to enjoy going to an event that they might not normally get the chance to attend."

In addition, community mental health providers were encouraged to sponsor activities to commemorate the week. A variety of activities took place including partnering with local high schools to hold health fairs, a Child Abuse Awareness event focusing on mental health issues, poster contests, purchasing green ribbons recognizing the importance of children's mental health in the community and the state, and distribution of promotional items to parents at community monthly support meetings.

It is hoped that local and state efforts reduced stigma and increased the communities' awareness of the 25,000 youth who suffer with severe emotional disabilities that are served by the department and community mental health centers throughout the state.

Commissioner Honored with Hope Award

Commissioner John Houston recently received the prestigious Hope Award, which recognizes an individual who does the most to unify the various stakeholders in the mental illness arena, consumers, family members, the Department of Mental Health and the community mental health centers.

The award is presented at the annual Alabama Recovery Conference coordinated by the department's Office of Consumer Relations. The recipient is chosen by the Alabama Directions Council, which is comprised of leaders of support groups and drop-in centers from around the state and statewide consumer operated programs. In making the presentation, Office of Consumer Relations Director Mike Autrey stated that while recovery is defined by many people in many ways, "Hope" is common to everyone's definition, saying that, "Without Hope, the recovery process cannot even begin."

In the Commissioner's nomination, his dedication to consumers was highlighted and the fact that he listens carefully to his words about consumers and family members. The nomination went on to say that, "He doesn't make you feel second class, he speaks openly and with respect."



Shortly after receiving the Hope Award, Commissioner Houston (center) gathered for a picture with Mike Autrey (left), Director of the Office of Consumer Relations, and Sylvia Richey (right), Director of the Alabama Directions Council.

Consumer Advocates *Get Results!*



Jeff Ridgeway and Mike McLemore are two shining examples of advocacy truly in action. Their work has benefited thousands within the state of Alabama. Many may recognize Jeff because he was recently featured in several statewide newspapers due to his role in getting a bill passed that will require any new state laws to refer to people with disabilities first, not simply as disabilities. For example, “disabled” is changed to “individuals with disabilities” and so on. Jeff’s win was not an overnight success, but had been something he and various advocacy groups statewide had been working on for quite some time.

Jeff is the current President of Alabama Disability Action Coalition (ADAC) and has served and continues to serve on many national, statewide and local organizations in different positions. After hearing about a People First Language bill that passed in Washington state, Jeff called the groups responsible to find out what they did and got permission to use their bill as a template. Jeff then coordinated with several organizations, including People First of Alabama and the Vocational Rehabilitation Service to come up with a list of words and phrases that were not acceptable to people with disabilities, then put it in what Jeff calls “law language” and summated it. Several other organizations gave their support to the bill and helped rally public support.

The next crucial step for getting the bill passed came when Jeff attended a legislative day that the Independent

Living Center of Mobile was holding and met with Representative Randy Davis about the bill. He agreed to become the House sponsor of the bill. Jeff used his old contacts and talked with Senator Ben Brooks, who he had previously worked with on another project, and he became the Senate sponsor. When asked how he convinced the men to become sponsors and supporters of the bill, Jeff said, “I didn’t have to do a lot of convincing. Straight away, both men agreed the law needed to be changed.”

Once Jeff had the right amount of support lined up, and a bill that was ready to take to the Legislature, he found himself at the last day of the regular legislative session. As bills dropped by the wayside, only a couple of hours were left before the session ended. That is when

“I didn’t have to do a lot of convincing. Straight away, both men agreed the law needed to be changed.”

Rep. Randy Davis made an appeal to his fellow lawmakers to listen and at least consider the language bill. They did that and even more, as the legislature unanimously passed the bill. Jeff was even invited down to the floor to celebrate its success, something that some say they had never seen before.



Jeff says he was honored and privileged that they invited him to the floor, and goes on to say, “It’s hard to explain for those who have not worked with the Legislature but it was so, so sweet to get every state lawmaker in one unanimous voice to say that dignity, understanding, inclusion and respectful language matters in Alabama.”

When asked what message he has for other advocates, consumers and family members, he says, “We still have a long journey before total equality is achieved but, this is yet another brick in the yellow brick road to a time and place where everyone has a equal shot at jobs, housing, medical, community life and all that goes with it. Anyone can play a part - some speak, some make phone calls, some write letters and e-mails. Whatever part you choose to play, know that you can make a difference, even it doesn’t seem like it at the time.”

While Jeff has had success with the Legislature, Mike McLemore and other advocates for substance addiction recovery have been experiencing their own successes. In his work with Friends of Recovery, Morgan, Madison, Lawrence, Limestone, Cullman and Randolph counties (FORMLL), which is the largest local chapter of Alabama Voices for Recovery with nearly 4,000 members, Mike has been championing for a host of services that would enhance the recovery movement statewide.

Realizing the need for more adolescent outpatient



services, Mike has been working with the department and other organizations to campaign for outpatient services in every county in the state. Transportation has been a big area of need as well, and FORMLL has helped arrange transportation for people to get assessments so they can get the services they need. This has been especially beneficial in rural areas where treatment centers may be many miles away. In addition, FORMLL helped facilitate 239 people into treatment last year, and has already assisted 194 individuals this year. This assistance comes in the form of making contact with the local mental health centers, providing transportation and monetary assistance for medications, and much more.

Perhaps one of substance addiction’s biggest successes in recent years is the recovery and advocacy movement itself. In the past, many who have recovered from substance addiction illnesses were hesitant to come forward and share their story and experiences with others. Through organizations such as FORMLL, this has drastically changed, and these days the recovery movement is going strong and growing even stronger.

Through community trainings, which FORMLL holds frequently in its areas, discussions about consumer rights and the need for increased treatment services flow freely and plans are developed. In addition, people are encouraged to share their story in hopes to fight the stigma that occurs when one has or is recovering from a substance addiction illness. These personal stories encourage others to step forward to seek treatment while also showing the public that recovery is possible.

Great strides are being made because of people like Jeff and Mike who are working everyday to make the lives of those around them better. Congratulations to these two on all their successes to date and we look forward to sharing more on their future successes.

BUILDING Bridges

Adult Psychiatric Institute Aims to Close the Gap Between Mental Health Care and General Health Care

DMH/MR's Division of Mental Illness, in conjunction with National Alliance on Mental Illness, Alabama and a multitude of partnering agencies, hosted its annual Adult Psychiatric Institute April 11 – 13, in Orange Beach. In previous years, this Continuing Medical Education (CME) event had been a forum for state psychiatric hospital and community mental health center psychiatrists to meet, network, and obtain current best practice information.

As a result of the Institute receiving support by a Transformation Transfer Initiative (TTI) Grant through the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) with funds from Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the Institute was expanded to include representatives of partner agencies and individual primary care physicians with whom community mental health centers had existing working relationships. The inclusion of primary care providers in the Institute was the TTI Grant's first initiative.

The focus of the meeting this year was to promote the collaboration and integration of primary medical care and mental health services. It was the expectation that the interface with these two systems of care would enhance services relative to the health issues that individuals with serious mental illness face.

As the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health notes, "Improving services for individuals with mental illnesses requires paying close attention to how mental health care and general medical care interact. While mental health and physical health are clearly connected, a chasm exists between the mental health care and general health care systems in financing and practice."

The theme for this year's Institute was "Promoting Primary Care and Psychiatric Partnership." The agenda was developed to touch on issues of interest to both systems of care, mental health and primary care.

Joseph Parks, M.D. who was awarded the 2006 American Psychiatric Association Bronze Achievement Award for a program controlling pharmacy costs by improving prescribing practices and serves as the Director for the Division of Comprehensive Psychiatric Services



for the State of Missouri Department of Mental Health, was a presenter during the first day of meeting.

Dr. Parks' topic was "Responding to the Epidemic of Death in Persons with Mental Illness." His research indicated persons with major mental illness typically lose more than 25 years of normal life span compared to the general population. Studies indicated the early mortality is more attributable to primary medical conditions than to suicide. His presentation included strategic approaches to reduce excess illnesses and premature deaths among this population.

Avrim Fishkind, M.D. who has designed multiple comprehensive psychiatric emergency programs and is the current President of the American Association for Emergency Psychiatry, closed the session on Saturday evening. Dr. Fishkind's topic "Trauma: Preparation for Future Radical Transformation," highlighted principles and techniques of psychological first aid, resiliency and stress inoculation. He discussed issues related to trauma in mental health and its etiology and diagnosis.

Other topics presented during the conference were: Metabolic Health Evaluation Based Upon Diabetic Screening and The Role of the Family Practitioner in Caring for Psychiatric Clients. Positive evaluations flowed from the attendees, with one physician saying, "The conference helped a lot with bridging patient care in both inpatient and outpatient settings."

Submitted by: Katrina Nettles, Division of Mental Illness Services



For more than 10 years during the month of September, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has sponsored National Recovery Month. This year's theme is "Real People, Real Recovery." The Recovery Month observance highlights the societal benefits of substance abuse treatment, lauds the contributions of treatment providers and promotes the message that recovery from substance abuse in all its forms is possible. The observance also encourages citizens to take action to help expand and improve the availability of effective substance abuse treatment for those in need. Each year a new theme, or emphasis, is selected for the observance.

Recovery Month provides a platform to celebrate people in recovery and those who serve them. Each September, thousands of treatment programs around the country celebrate their successes and share them with their neighbors, friends, and colleagues in an effort to educate the public about treatment, how it works, for whom, and why. Substance abuse treatment providers have made significant accomplishments, having transformed the lives of untold thousands of Americans. These successes often go unnoticed by the broader population; therefore, Recovery Month provides a vehicle to celebrate these successes.

Recovery Month also serves to educate the public on substance abuse as a national health crisis, that addiction is a treatable disease, and that recovery is possible. Recovery Month highlights the benefits of treatment for not only the affected individual, but for their family, friends, workplace, and society as a whole. Educating the public reduces the stigma associated with addiction and treatment. Accurate knowledge of the disease helps people to understand the importance of supporting treatment programs, those who work within the treatment field, and those in need of treatment.

The department's Division of Substance Abuse Services has been hard at work, with the assistance of several partners, in coordinating several activities statewide to mark this important observance. The Governor will soon

sign a proclamation declaring September as Alabama Recovery Month, and many successful events that were held last year will be offered again, as well as a few new opportunities.

One of last year's most popular activities was Recovery Sunday which had approximately 800 participants and included national and local guest speakers in addition to special worship performances. The event was designed to meet one of the department's objectives in establishing and enhancing efforts with the faith-based community to encourage individuals seeking recovery. The 2nd annual Recovery Sunday event will be held on September 21 in Montgomery. In addition, a Recovery Rally, which was also held for the first time last year, will be offered again this year in Birmingham on September 20.

Two new opportunities that will be offered this year are a Sobriety 5K Run and a Recovery Art Show. The Sobriety Run will be held on September 13, in Birmingham and more than 200 individuals are expected to participate. The Recovery Art Show is co-sponsored by UAB and an open house featuring drawings, paintings, sculpture and photography depicting addiction in an artistic format will be held on September 17.

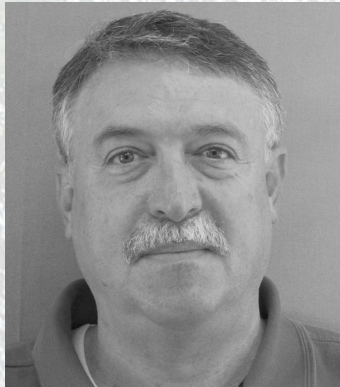
Kent Hunt, Associate Commissioner for the Division of Substance Abuse Services, states that, "Alabamians will have the opportunity to participate in events emphasizing the reality that thousands of Alabama citizens are enjoying lives in recovery from substance addiction. All the events will be fun, uplifting, inspiring and educational. I encourage everyone to find an event to participate in because the more we learn about the possibilities and realities of addiction recovery, the more likely we will be to seek recovery for ourselves or to help guide someone else toward recovery."



From left to right: Rev. Edward J. Nettles, Sr., Dr. H. Westley Clark, M.D., and David Battle talk after a 2007 Recovery Sunday event. Battle, who was keynote speaker at the event, is a former Auburn University football player who is now in recovery from substance abuse addiction. Dr. Clark is the national head of the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment in Washington, D.C.

A PERFECT FIT:

Steve Davis Named Department Historian



Steve Davis is now in a position that seems tailor made for him. On July 1, 2008, he began work as the department's first official Historian. While most of his work now focuses on Bryce Hospital because of the ongoing discussions about its preservation issues, (see the update at the end of Steve's story) he also

works on documenting, categorizing, preserving and storing all the archives that are now in possession of the department, as well as searching for other archival items by doing research in conjunction with the University of Alabama library, and visiting with private citizens who may have information about the department's history.

Although he has always been interested in history and was and still is a member of several national historical organizations, when Steve first came to work with the department more than 33 years ago, his mind was not on finding a position that centered around history. He was a recent graduate of the University of Alabama with a degree in public relations and journalism, and was about to get married. When a public relations job he had lined up fell by the wayside, he needed to find something fast and came to work at Bryce working the gates. He later when on to work as a laborer, in the police department and then as the Director of Public Relations. In that role, his love of history began to inch into his job duties. He created a small display area that contained some archival materials and enjoyed giving public tours of Bryce.

His knowledge about Bryce's history became even more developed when he later moved to the personnel department there and hired an experienced librarian who had worked at the University of Alabama's library. In helping her get settled into her new position at Bryce, Steve shared information about the archives the department had, where they were located, and so on. That led him to be appointed to the library committee as a liaison, and he worked closely with the head librarian for more than 20 years. When she retired, many people including hospital directors, department co-workers and interested community citizens would come to him with archival or preservation questions.

Commissioner Houston recognized that a central point of contact needed to be established to answer all

these questions and to develop plans to preserve and catalog various historical items. Steve says he enjoys many things about the job, including working with the Bryce Historical Committee and reading through old files and documents that not many people have seen before. He also likes speaking to various civic clubs and organizations about some of the department's history. He says he believes the importance of preserving history should not be an afterthought and that people should know that, "Alabama has a heritage of being the pinnacle of success and that there was a time in Alabama when the treatment of mental illnesses was on a high level and that we were the best, certainly in the region, and maybe the nation." He adds in the old adage that, "In order to know where you are going, you truly do have to know where you have been."

An Update on the Bryce Historical Committee

In the spring of 2008, Commissioner Houston formed a committee whose task was to make recommendations regarding historical preservation issues with respect to Bryce Hospital in Tuscaloosa. The committee consists of a number of people who have family connections to the Searcy and Tarwater families, and other families who have made significant contributions to the history of mental health in that area. Also on the committee are individuals from the department, the University of Alabama, the Alabama Historical Commission and local historical preservation groups as well.

So far, the committee has recommended that the Kirkbride-Sloan historical structure built in 1861 that is most identified with the Bryce campus be preserved. The white domed structure was a model for mental health facilities across the country during the 19th century. In addition to that recommendation, the committee will be gathering artifacts and archival materials for preservation. This includes documents, paintings, furniture, and other items of historical significance.

Ultimately, the committee will study the possibility of establishing with these archival materials a national mental health museum. It is uncertain where this museum would be housed, however, there are strong sentiments that it should be housed in either the mansion or the old hospital itself at Bryce. The committee will continue to make recommendations to Commissioner Houston in the coming months about the historical preservation of Bryce, the cemetery, and archival materials, and more news will be forthcoming as those recommendations are made.

CAPITOL

Showcase

CONSUMER ART EXHIBITION



A call for entries will soon be going out for the 4th annual Capitol Showcase Consumer Art Exhibit. The event, hosted by the department's Office of Consumer Relations, gives Alabama artists with mental illness, mental retardation, or substance addiction illness, the opportunity to display their artistic abilities to the public. Just as important as the artwork are the stories that artists are asked to share in order to promote dignity and a broader awareness and understanding of the individuals the department serves.

Entry into the art exhibit is open to department consumers past and present, and there is no entry fee. Artwork must be two-dimensional and unframed, and no entries will be accepted without an accompanying story and signature of the artist. Along with their story, an entry form must be submitted, as well as a photo of the artwork that is being entered, labeled with the artist's name and the dimensions of the piece. More than 100



entries will be judged and accepted for the exhibition, with those having a strong accompanying story given preference. Guidelines for the stories are given in the call to entry forms.

The artwork and stories will be on display to the public in the Alabama State Capitol Building from November 3 until November 28, 2008. Commissioner John Houston says, "Hopefully, people will walk away from the exhibit with a greater respect and deeper understanding of people with mental disabilities." A reception will be held for artists, their friends and family members during the month of November. Details about this reception will be announced in the near future.

For more information about the entry guidelines, or about the exhibit itself, please call (334) 242-3417 or (334) 242-3456.



"Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life."

- Pablo Picasso



First Boat Ride at Camp Partlow

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